

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Canceled.)

2. (Canceled.)

3. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for electrostatic spray application of a coating material to a target, comprising:

a target holder which holds a target at a first electrical potential;

a coating discharge nozzle body formed from an electrically conductive material, said nozzle having a nozzle orifice for discharging the coating material;

means for applying to the nozzle body a second electrical potential to electrostatically discharge the coating material from the orifice toward the target; and

a spark discharge voltage generator;

wherein the spark discharge voltage generator is electrically connected to the target holder and generates a voltage spike sufficient to remove an oxide layer from at least one contact point of the target where the target contacts the target holder.

4. (Original) The electrostatic spray coating apparatus of claim 3, wherein, after the voltage spike is applied to the target holder, the target is electrically connected to a ground potential.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Withdrawn) A method for electrostatic spray application of a coating material to a target, comprising the steps of:

providing a target holder which holds a target;
providing a coating discharge nozzle body formed from an electrically conductive material, said nozzle body having a nozzle orifice for discharging the coating material;
applying a first electrical potential to the target; and
applying a second electrical potential to the nozzle body to cause the coating material to be discharged from the nozzle orifice toward the target.

9. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic spray coating method of claim 8, further comprising, prior to the step of applying a second electrical potential to the nozzle body, the step of:

generating a voltage spike with a spark discharge voltage generator sufficient to remove an oxide layer from at least one contact point of the target where the target contacts the target holder.

10. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic spray coating method of claim 9, wherein, after the voltage spike is applied to the target holder, the target is electrically connected to a ground potential.

11. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic spray coating method of claim 8, wherein the target is a medical device, and
the coating fluid contains a therapeutic agent.

12. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic spray coating method of claim 11, wherein the medical device is a stent.

13. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic spray coating method of claim 8, further comprising the step of:
providing a pressurized fluid in fluid communication with the nozzle orifice; and
ejecting the pressurized fluid from the nozzle orifice to cause the coating material to be discharged from the nozzle orifice toward the target.

14. (Withdrawn) A method for electrostatic application of a coating material to a target, comprising the step of:

generating a voltage spike with a spark discharge voltage generator sufficient to remove an oxide layer from at least one contact point of the target where the target contacts a target holder.

15. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic spray coating apparatus of claim 14, wherein, while the voltage spike is applied to the target holder, the target is electrically connected to a ground potential.

16. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic coating method of claim 14, wherein
the target is a medical device, and
the coating fluid contains a therapeutic agent.

17. (Withdrawn) The electrostatic coating method of claim 16, wherein
the medical device is a stent.

18. (Previously Presented) The electrostatic spray coating apparatus of claim 3,
wherein
the target is a medical device, and
the coating material comprises a therapeutic agent.

19. (Previously Presented) The electrostatic spray coating apparatus of claim 18,
wherein the medical device is a stent.